

# **MASTER PLAN FOR ROBERTS PARK**

## **I. Introduction & Background**

In 1999, City Council passed a resolution resolving to initiate a master planning process for each park in the City. Since then master plans have been created for Frady Park, Cherry Hill Park and Madison Park. Over the next three years master plans will be created for the remaining eight parks. The next park to receive a master plan will be Roberts Park.

Roberts Park, located on Lynn Place just east of the intersection of Randolph and South West Street, is 2 acres in size.

The completion of a master plan is normally done before a park is developed. In Falls Church all of the existing parks have already been at least partially developed. Therefore, the purpose for creating park master plans for City parks, like Roberts Park, is not to begin the development process. Rather it is to establish clear and concise plans that accurately locate existing facilities and guide future development of the parks, while serving to protect and preserve the City's open space.

The first step in the process for developing a Master Plan for Roberts Park was to conduct two public hearings to gather information and suggestions from the citizens of Falls Church. The hearings for Roberts Park were held on May 5, 2004 and June 2, 2004. This document, the Conceptual Development Plan for Roberts Park, represents the next step in the process. The Conceptual Development Plan will be presented to the community for input in public hearings to be held in September and October of 2004. The purpose for the park, the desired future visitor experience and park themes establish important guidelines for the Conceptual Development Plan.

The Roberts Park Conceptual Development Plan describes the current amenities in the park, and makes recommendations for the preservation and future development of the park.

### **A. Park Purpose**

1. Preserve and protect natural resources
2. Provide a variety of passive and active recreational activities for all age groups.

### **B. Desired Future Visitor Experience**

1. Visitors will be able to participate in a number of active recreational activities.

2. Visitors will be able to participate in a number of passive recreational activities.

### **C. Park Themes**

1. Neighborhood Park (active and passive recreation)
2. Community Park (active and passive recreation)

### **D. Property Description**

As previously noted, Roberts Park is located on Lynn Place. A portion of the park is located within the floodplain of Tripps Run. The entire park is located within a Resource Management Area, as designated by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance.

The only public access to the park is from Lynn Place as private homes abut the park on Randolph Street, South West Street, Poplar Drive and South Spring Street. While there has been an effort to plant some trees in the outer perimeter of the park, a large portion of the 2 acres has been intentionally left open.

### **E. Park Designation**

Roberts Park has been designated in the City's Comprehensive Plan as a Neighborhood Park. Neighborhood parks are basically "walk to" parks, primarily serving the surrounding neighborhood. The service area of such parks is usually about one-quarter of a mile and the visits are usually short term.

While Roberts Park does indeed serve as a neighborhood Park, it also, because of the facilities at the park, serves frequently as a Community Park. Community Parks are parks that serve the entire City of Falls Church and are often "drive to" parks. The large area of open space and the picnic shelter are amenities that are in short supply in the City.

The amenities at Roberts Park facilitate their use for passive leisure and informal active recreation

### **F. Existing Facilities/Amenities**

1. Open, level field
2. Basketball court
3. Playground equipment

4. Picnic shelter
5. Benches
6. Picnic tables
7. Barbecue grills

## **II. Description of the Conceptual Development Plan Elements**

### **A. Elimination of Existing Facilities**

None of the existing facilities will be eliminated. All of the existing facilities are heavily used and serve to enhance the visitor experience.

### **B. New Plan Elements**

#### **1. Park Access**

As noted above, access to Roberts Park is limited. Land or an easement should be acquired on either Poplar Drive or S. Spring Street to provide a second access point to the park

#### **2. Parking**

Given the shortage of athletic field space and picnic shelters in the City of Falls Church the open grassy field and picnic shelter in Roberts Park will continue to attract park users from the entire city. Many of these park users will drive to the park. With no parking lot available, park users are forced to park on adjacent neighborhood streets, often creating safety and traffic issues for both neighbors and park users. An effort will be made to acquire property that could be used to provide off-street parking to park users.

### **C. Enhancements**

#### **1. Field**

The field located in Roberts Park is currently used heavily for soccer, lacrosse and football. The turf on this field is worn and there are a number of holes and low spots that need to be repaired. A yearly maintenance program for the field will be established to improve the turf and to provide a safer surface for athletic use. If the field is too wet for use it will be closed to all users.

The field at Roberts Park will not normally be used for scheduled practices or league play but will instead be left open for informal drop-in use.

## **2. Playground Equipment**

New playground equipment will be installed to replace outdated and worn equipment. In addition, new equipment will be installed that is designed to better serve elementary school-aged children.

## **3. Increase Size of Park**

Actively pursue the purchase of property within the flood plain to increase the size of the park and the amount of open space for active recreational uses.

## **4. Screening**

Add trees and shrubs to improve the natural screening between the fenced playground area and the playfield.

## **D. Stream**

Until the early 1970's Tripps Run stream ran through the north side of Roberts Park in an open natural channel. In the 1970's the stream was enclosed in pipes made of lined corrugated metal. The service life of corrugated metal pipes is approximately 30 years. Therefore, the pipe through Roberts Park is close to reaching the end of its serviceable life.

Although there is no evidence the pipes are in imminent danger of failing, the City Of Falls Church will be inspecting the pipe sections through Roberts Park to determine their condition. If it is determined that sections of the pipe through Roberts Park have structurally failed or are about to fail a determination will be made on how best to proceed to repair the failed system. Options for repairing the system include replacing failed pipes with new concrete pipes, or daylighting the stream.

Daylighting consists of opening up existing enclosed waterways to improve water quality and to restore the natural ecosystem of the floodplain. Prior to any recommendation to daylight the stream the City must evaluate the adequacy of the natural channel to convey the 10-year storm. In addition, the effect on the 100-year floodplain must be evaluated.

## **E. Trees**

Efforts will continue to plant native trees in appropriate locations that will not negatively impact the open field space. Shade trees will be planted around the playground area.

## **E. Open Space**

In accordance with the City's Comprehensive Plan, which states that "the City will conserve and maintain existing parks, open space and natural resources," the park and the open space in the park will be preserved.

The field in the park is critical to the City's efforts to provide an area where people of all ages can gather informally to participate in a variety of athletic endeavors. Roberts Park has the largest grassy, reasonably level field in the City that is not controlled for scheduled athletic activities.

## **F. Conclusion**

Roberts Park is a unique facility that presents many challenges to the City. As a Neighborhood Park, Roberts Park has shortcomings, as there is no easy public access for residents from the Poplar Drive or South Spring Street side of the park. Options for access from this side of the park must be explored.

As the only park with a field large enough to support informal drop-in use for athletic activities, Roberts Park, by default, has evolved to also serve as a Community Park to those wishing to play sports informally. A "Community Park" without designated parking creates safety and traffic concerns for the surrounding neighborhood as park users turn to neighborhood streets to park. Options for adding off-street parking through the acquisition of property and the construction of a parking lot with a pervious surface should be a priority.

As previously noted Tripps Run previously traversed through Roberts Park as a natural open stream. When the corrugated pipe that carries Tripps Run through the park today reaches the end of its service life the City should consider and study the possibility of daylighting the stream

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